

ANALYSIS OF ORIGINAL BILL

Author: Ayala Analyst: Roger Lackey Bill Number: SB 1609

Related Bills: None Telephone: 845-3627 Introduced Date: 02-12-98

Attorney: Doug Bramhall Sponsor:

SUBJECT: State Forms shall Include Public Access Telephone Number

SUMMARY

This bill would require that each state form shall contain a public access telephone number of the state agency responsible for administering that form.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This bill would be effective January 1, 1999, and apply to all forms used after that date.

Program History/Background

The Franchise Tax Board's public access phone system for general information and assistance is comprised of an interactive voice response system (IVR) and the Taxpayer Service Center. The IVR is an automated phone system that provides scripted answers for commonly asked tax questions. The Taxpayer Service Center phone system is staffed by employees who answer the more complex and uncommon questions asked by taxpayers.

In the calendar year 1997, the department's two public access phone systems answered a combined total of 5,804,973 taxpayer phone calls (IVR = 3,521,546; Taxpayer Service Center = 2,283,427).

Currently, the department's public access phone system is budgeted to answer 70% of all phone calls received. However, the Board has requested that the department answer all phone calls at a 98% rate. As a result, the department will incur additional costs to operate at the capacity requested by the Board. The department is currently seeking to obtain additional funds for the 1998-99 fiscal year to meet the Board's request.

SPECIFIC FINDINGS

Current **state law** provides that the telephone number of a public agency communicating with the public must be shown on all official stationery.

DEPARTMENTS THAT MAY BE AFFECTED:

___ STATE MANDATE

___ GOVERNOR'S APPOINTMENT

Board Position:

___ S ___ O
___ SA ___ OUA
___ N ___ NP
___ NA ___ NAR
___ X ___ PENDING

Agency Secretary Position:

___ S ___ O
___ SA ___ OUA
___ N ___ NP
___ NA ___ NAR
DEFER TO ___

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE USE

Position Approved ___
Position Disapproved ___
Position Noted ___

Department Director

G. Alan Hunter

3/24/98

Agency Secretary

Date

By:

Date:

"Official stationery" applies to letters or correspondence written to the public. However, for the Franchise Tax Board purposes, stationery includes all correspondence, forms, and billings used by the Franchise Tax Board.

The Franchise Tax Board operates in accordance with state law by providing public access telephone numbers on:

- All nontax information/correspondence sent by the department
- Tax booklets (containing forms and instructions) and supplementary tax publications,
- Collection and billing statements
- Special purpose publications, such as disaster loss publications
- Inserts (However, since inserts are used by different areas of the departments, many inserts do not have a telephone number printed on them, but instead refer to the telephone number on the primary form enclosed.)

This bill would require that each state form shall contain a public access telephone number of the state agency responsible for administering that form.

Implementation Considerations

The following implementation concerns have been identified. The author's staff has indicated a willingness to amend the bill to resolve these concerns.

The FTB does not publish public access numbers on tax forms. However, the public access numbers are provided in the tax booklets containing the forms and are provided on instructions, which accompany the forms. These numbers include the automated IVR phone system and the Taxpayer Service Center phone system. On some tax forms, adding a public access telephone number would consume valuable space. On certain forms, the phone information could only be added by removing line instructions normally provided for calculating tax. In addition, other forms that have no room for additional information would need to be redesigned. This includes "scannable" forms approved by FTB and produced by tax preparation software.

This bill would require the department to print a public access telephone number on each form including mailing inserts. The FTB inserts are used in a variety of mailings, and generally refer to the telephone number on the primary form with which the insert is mailed. To comply with this bill, the department would either have to print a variety of different public access numbers on the inserts or the department's general information telephone number. However, publishing the general information number on the inserts may result in additional calls that would have to be redirected.

The department is currently seeking to obtain the funding to begin operating the call center answering 98% of all phone calls received (As discussed in the program/history section of this analysis). The additional calls that may be received as a result of this bill and that would have to be redirected could inhibit the department's ability to meet the Board's desired access level.

This bill would be effective January 1, 1999, which means the department would have to make the necessary revisions for the 1998 tax forms that are available to be filed in 1999. The department must meet the printing deadline for the tax booklets and tax forms by the end of July each year.

This bill would require every state agency to place a public access telephone number on both internal and external forms. It is understood that it is the author's intent to provide public access telephone numbers only for those forms seen or used by the public.

FISCAL IMPACT

Departmental Costs

The department's costs to administer this bill have not been determined. However, if the implementation considerations addressed in this analysis are not resolved, the department costs are expected to be significant.

Tax Revenue Estimate

This bill would not impact the state income tax revenue.

BOARD POSITION

Pending.

